

REMARKS

Claims 18-19, 21-22, 24-36, and 38-40, all of which are currently amended, appear in this application for the Examiner's review and consideration. Claim 24 is amended to include the recitations of claim 20. Claim 21 is amended to correct dependency. The remaining claims are amended to depend from claim 24, directly or indirectly. Claim 33 is also amended to recite the word "long" as the Examiner suggested. Claims 20, 23, and 37 are cancelled without prejudice. As no new matter is introduced, entry of the amendments at this time is respectfully requested.

The amendments to the claims are being made solely to expedite prosecution of this application and do not constitute an acquiescence to any rejection by the Examiner. Applicants submit that this Amendment After Final does not raise new issues for consideration or necessitate the undertaking of any additional search of the art by the Examiner because all of the elements and their relationships were earlier claimed. This Amendment After Final should therefore allow for immediate action by the Examiner. Applicants also submit that entry of this Amendment After Final would place the application in better form for appeal, should the Examiner dispute the patentability of any of the pending claims.

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication that claims 20 and 21 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. In response, claim 24, from which claim 20 depended, is amended as a rewritten form of claim 20, and includes all of the limitations of claim 20. Claim 20 is cancelled. Claim 21 is amended to depend from claim 24. Accordingly, claims 24 and 21 are believed to be in condition for allowance.

All of the remaining claims are also amended to depend from claim 24, directly or indirectly. These claims include all of the limitations of claim 24 and further include additional limitations. Thus, these claims are also believed to be in condition for allowance.

In the Office Action, claim 33 is objected to because of an informality as set forth on page 2 of the Office Action. In response, the claim is amended to recite "long" after "sufficiently" as the Examiner suggested. Accordingly, this objection is overcome.

Claims 18, 22-24, 26, 28-32, and 34-40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,649,912 to Peterson. Claim 19 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Peterson in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,788,670 to

Reinhard et al. Claims 25, 27, and 33 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Peterson. All of these rejections are moot, however, in view of the claim amendments explained above. Accordingly, all rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102(b) and 103(a) should be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing, the entire application is now believed to be in condition for allowance, early notice of which would be appreciated. Should the Examiner not agree, then a personal or telephonic interview is respectfully requested to discuss any remaining issues in an effort to expedite the allowance of this application.

Respectfully submitted,



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